

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 03119 051217Z
ACTION SS-25

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P R 051124Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5659
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T AMMAN 3119

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, JO
SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING - INTERNAL SITUATION

SUMMARY: AS A RESULT OF DISTURBANCES IN AMMAN ON
MARCH 20-21, KING ITLDTS
USLY CONTEMPLATING SETTING
UP WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS AN APPOINTIVE ADVISORY
BODY FOR HIMSELF AND THE GOVERNOENT. IT WOULD BE A
PROTO-PARLIAMENT (LOWER HOUSE). THE PRESENT SENATE
WOULD CONTINUE. IT COULD EVOLVE INTO AN ELECTED
ASSEMBLY OVER TIME AND WHEN ELECTIONS CAP BE HELD,
NOW BLOCKED BECAUSE OF THE PROBLEMS REGARDING STATUS OF
RESIDENT PALESTINIAN POPULATION STEMMING FROM THE RABAT
SUMMIT CONFERENCE. THE KING EXPECTS THE NEW
BODY TO ADVISE HIM AND THE GOVERNMENT ON BOTH
LEGISLATION AND POLICY, TO BE WIDELY REPRESENTATIVES
AND TO INCLUDE YOUNGER LEADERS. END SUMMARY

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1. DURING APRIL 4 TALK WITH HUSSEIN HE RAISED WITH
ME AND SPOKE EXTENSIVELY ABOUT SOME OF HIS DOMESTIC
POLITICAL CONCERNS.

2. MOST ON HIS MWND WERE THE DISTURBANCES WHICO
TOOK PLACE IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS HERE ON MARCH
20 AND 21. HE IN PART, AT LEAST SUBLIMINALLY, SEEMS

TO BLAME HIMSELF FOR THEM, WAS QUITE DEFENSIVE ABOUT THEM, BUT ALSO RATIONALIZES THE OUTBREAK BY SAYING THAT THE TROUBELS IN EFFECT PERFORMED A CATHARTIC FUNCTION AND ALSO AWAKENED HIM AND OTHERS TO THE NEED FOR SOME MORE FAR-REACHING CHANGES.

3. AS A RESULT, HE TOLD ME THAT HE EXPECTS IN THE NEXT TEN DAYS OR TWO WEEKS TO SET UP AN APPOINTIVE ADVISORY ASSEMBLY TO CONSULT WITH HIM AND THE GOVERNMENT OVER LEGISLATION AND CURRENT POLITICAL ISSUES. HE SEES IT AS A MEANS OF BROADENING THE POLITICAL BASE AND THAT THE TROUBLES HERE MADE IT CLEAR THAT YOUNG RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP NEEDED TO BE FOSTERED OR IT WOULD GROW UP UNDERGROUND AMONG THE COMMUNISTS OR THE BAATH. (THIS IS AN IDEA THE KING WAS THINKING ABOUT A YEAR AGO, BUT APPARENTLY THE RIOTS HAVE NOW KICKED IT LOSE.)

4. HIS VIEW IS THAT THE ADVISORY BODY WILL BE THE FIRST STEP ON THE ROAD TO A PARLIAMENT. THE LATTER CANNOT BE RECONSTITUTED NOW BECAUSE OF THE SERIOUS PROBLEM WHICH WILL INEVITABLY RISE OVER THE HOLDING OF AN ELECTION HERE IN LIGHT OF THE RABAT SUMMIT DECISION THAT THE PLO IN EFFECT REPRESENTS THE PALESTINIANS. (IN SHORT, IF THE GOJ HOLDS PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND INCLUDES EAST BANK
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PALESTINIANS, IT BELIEVES THAT THE PLO AND THE WHOLE ARAB WORLD WILL COME DOWN ON ITS NECK. IF IT DOES NOT INCLUDE THOSE PALESTINIANS IN THE ELECTORATE, IT WILL TEAR APART ITS OWN POLITICAL FABRIC. IT HAS THUS CHOSEN A THIRD (AND NOT UNCONGENIAL) OPTION--NO ELECTIONS FOR THE MOMENT). HUSSEIN SEEMS INTENT ON FINDING YOUNGER LEADERS TO PARTICIPATE AND TO MAKE THE BODY RATHER LIBERAL AND FREE-SWINGING.

5. COMMENT: THIS WILL BE AN ENORMOUSLY NOVEL AND INTERESTING EXPERIMENT FOR JORDAN IF IT GOES THROUGH. FOR YEARS, SMARTING UNDER THE ATTEMPTS OF PAST ELECTED PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENTS (IN THE LATE 1950'S) TO DEPOSE HIM, HUSSEIN HAS HAD FEW DIFFICULTIES RESTRAINING ANY ENTHUSIASM HE MIGHT EVER HAVE HAD FOR REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. THE EXPERIMENT WILL BE INTERESTING TO WATCH. THE CHOICE OF LEADERS TO PARTICIPATE WILL BE CRUCIAL, AS INDEED WILL BE THE TREATMENT BY THE KING AND GOVERNMENT OF THEIR ADVISORY POWERS AND BY THE PRESS OF THEIR DEBATES. HUSSEIN SEEMS INTENT ON INSTITUTING THIS CHANGE AND WE WILL FOLLOW CLOSELY THE RESULTS.

YESTERDAY HE SPOKE WITH THE CABINET ABOUT IT. IF
CAREFULLY INSTITUTED IT COULD BE A STEP OF
REVOLUTIONARY (OR HOPEFULLY AT LEAST EVOLUTIONARY)
CHARACTER IN JORDAN'S PRESENTLY EXTREMELY LIMITED INTERNAL
POLITICAL LIFE. END COMMENT

6. KING ALSO CONSIDERING REVAMPING JORDAN UNIVERSITY
WHICH HAS FALLEN UNDER SWAY OF MOSLEM BROTHERHOOD
GROUP AND AS A RESULT HAS BECOME HEAVILY POLARIZED AND
WAS ONE OF COCKPITS OF TROUBLE DURING THE DISTURBANCES.
HE SAID WITH SOME RELISH THAT PRESENT MOSLEM BROTHER
PRESIDENT OF UNIVERSITY WILL BE SENT TO LIBYA AS
AMBASSADOR WHERE "HE CAN PREACH TO QADDHAFI."
PRESENT GOJ AMBASSADOR IN JIDDA, AND FIRST PRESIDENT
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OF THE JORDAN UNIVERSITY, WILL BE BROUGHT BACK TO
HEAD IT UP, BRINGING WITH HIM (ON PAST FORM) A
MORE ENLIGHTENED AND LIBERAL ADMINISTRATION.
PICKERING

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